

## CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING A NURSING HOME\*

Visiting any nursing home to consider it as a future home for you or a loved one to see firsthand what the environment of the home is like is one of the best ways to determine if the facility is suitable. Call the nursing homes you are interested in and make an appointment to meet with the admissions staff (usually a social worker). This will also give you an opportunity to ask questions about the care and services that the nursing home provides and to clarify any issues with regard to placing an individual in the nursing home.

Each nursing home has its own policies and procedures, but all must follow certain state and federal regulations and respect residents' rights. A copy of the home's policies should be available and its license should be prominently displayed.

Look at the checklist before you go on your nursing home visit to give you an idea about the kinds of questions to ask and what you should look for as you tour the facility and see the staff and the residents. Some of these questions may be more personally important to you and your family, and some are more important for finding out about the quality of care the residents get. Be observant of the interaction between caregivers and residents during the visit. Visit with several of the residents to see how they keep occupied, how they like the meals, and what they particularly like doing at the facility. Speak to the staff person in charge of special therapies, if possible. Use a new checklist for each nursing home you visit.

A good home should be clean. Look in the corners of residents' rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, nurses' stations, etc., as well as in the main visiting lounges. Look for cleanliness **everywhere**. Unpleasant odors reflect problems. Go back to see if an odor has been eliminated within a reasonable amount of time if there is one in a particular section of the home. This will give you an idea of how long it takes the home to deal with the cause of the unpleasant odor.

Use your completed checklist along with the quality information found at the “Nursing Home Compare” page at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web to help make your decision. The information found there includes items such as:

- The number of beds at the facility, and how many are being used (occupied).
- The number of staff working at the facility.
- Information about the residents (a profile).
- Nursing home inspection summary results.
- Quality measures for each nursing home will be added soon.

The local library or senior center may be able to help you find this information on their computer if you don't have one available. Another option is to call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) and a Customer Service Representative will read this information to you. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

“Nursing Home Compare” is updated monthly. The nursing home may have more current information.

\* This checklist is a compilation of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) brochure, [Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home](#), and, with their permission, the [New York State Checklist](#).

## NURSING HOME CHECKLIST

Name of Nursing Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

BASIC INFORMATION	Yes	No	Comments
Is the nursing home Medicare-certified?			
Is the nursing home Medicaid-certified?			
Does the nursing home have the level of care needed by the resident (e.g. skilled, <a href="#">custodial</a> ), and is a bed available?			
Does the nursing home have special services if needed in a separate unit (e.g. dementia, ventilator, or rehabilitation), and is a bed available?			
Is the nursing home located close enough for friends and family to visit?			
Does the nursing home have the last state inspection report posted?			
Has the nursing home corrected all deficiencies (failure to meet one or more Federal or State requirements) on its last state inspection report?			
Are there copies of notices of any pending hearings or orders pertaining to the nursing home issued by the State or a court?			
Is there a complete list of materials available for public inspection as required by Section 21782? (see Page 9 for explanation)			

FINANCIAL INFORMATION	Yes	No	Comments
How are resident personal funds handled?			
What system is in place for inventory of resident personal property?			
How is personal property handled, and returned to the resident/family upon discharge?			
What is the fee schedule?			
What services and supplies <b>are not included</b> ?			
What will these extra items cost?			
How often have the extra fees increased in the past and what were the increases?			

MEDICAL/NURSING CARE	Yes	No	Comments
When and how often does the facility perform a medical assessment to gather information regarding the resident, including information for the <a href="#">Minimum Data Set (MDS)</a> and <a href="#">Patient Review Instrument (PRI)</a> ?			
May residents still see their personal doctors?			

<b>MEDICAL/NURSING CARE (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Who will the physician be and what relationship will the resident or a family member have with this doctor if there is not a private doctor?			
How often will visits be made, and how will medical emergencies be handled?			
Are people assisted in walking for the purpose of exercising or retraining?			
Does the same nurse or aide care for the resident during each shift?			
Can a specialist be called in and how this is done if more than routine medical care is needed?			
Which hospital(s) is affiliated with the nursing home?			
Are care plan meetings held at times that are convenient for residents and family members to attend?			
Do residents receive preventive care, like a yearly flu shot, to help keep them healthy?			
What is the percentage of agency or "pool" staff used?			

<b>POLICIES AND PROCEDURES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are there policies and procedures in place for the following:			
-- for room assignments and changes?			
-- for reserving a bed if transferred to a hospital?			
-- for transfers/discharges?			
-- for permitting self-care?			
-- for emergency procedures?			
-- for visiting hours (should cover a 10-hour period and two meal times)?			
-- for phone calls?			
-- for leaving the facility for short visits with family or friends?			
-- for access to personal funds?			
What are the policies to protect residents' possessions and furniture? (How does the facility investigate missing items?)			
Are the following items posted in large print in a location easily accessible to patients, employees, and visitors, including the wheelchair bound:			
-- Resident rights and responsibilities?			
-- Complaint procedures used by the nursing home, established by state law, with the name, address, and telephone number of a person authorized by the department to receive complaints?			

<b>POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
-- A complete list of materials available for public inspection as required by section 21782?			
-- A posting of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all pertinent State client advocacy groups such as the State survey and certification agency, the State licensure office, the State ombudsman program, the protection and advocacy network, and the Medicaid fraud control unit?			
Does the nursing home accept responsibility for all abuse and neglect or just abuse or neglect it deems foreseeable?			

### ITEMS TO LOOK FOR DURING THE TOUR OF THE FACILITY:

<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are residents able to take part in a variety of activities?			
Do people in wheelchairs get to participate?			
What activities are provided for bed-bound residents?			
Does the nursing home have an active volunteer program?			
Are residents engaged in doing things or just sitting in a lounge or in the hallways?			
Are residents taken out for events in the community? How often? Where do they go? (Ask to see an activities calendar.)			
How often are outside events brought in for the entertainment of residents?			
Is there an active resident/family council?			
What religious services are offered at the facility? How frequently are these offered?			

<b>DEMENTIA UNIT/ALZHEIMER UNIT</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
What is the procedure for Preadmission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) for patients with Alzheimer or other psychosocial impairments?			
Does the Dementia Unit have specific precautions or safety features to protect residents from wandering out of the facility?			
Are there other types of safety features offered on this Dementia Unit to show me?			
What additional services does the Dementia Unit offer?			
What additional training does the staff of the Dementia Unit receive?			

<b>DEMENTIA UNIT/ALZHEIMER UNIT (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does your facility float staff from other units to work on the Dementia Unit at times when staffing may be short?			
What special activities does the facility offer the residents on the Dementia Unit?			
Is there a time or situation a resident would be required to leave the Dementia Unit?			
Does the facility offer assistance or education on Dementia for family members?			
What are the policies on toileting/incontinence care?			

<b>DINING AREAS--MENUS AND FOOD</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Is the dining room clean, attractive and colorful?			
Do you see the menu posted for residents?			
Do residents have a choice of food items at each meal?			
Do residents have an alternative to the main menu?			
What is the availability of ethnic foods or special diet preferences? (Ask if the potential resident's favorite foods are served.)			
Is the food appetizing and of good quality?			
Are residents encouraged and assisted by staff with eating and drinking (if necessary) while the food is served, if help is needed?			
Are nutritious snacks available upon request?			
Is this a time when socializing is encouraged?			

<b>HALLWAYS, STAIRS, LOUNGES, AND BATHROOMS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are exits clearly marked?			
Are there quiet areas where residents can visit with friends and family?			
Are there telephones available for the resident's use in a private area?			
Is there activity in the corridors?			
Are there handrails in the hallways and grab bars in the bathrooms?			

<b>MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
What specific types of mental health/mental retardation services does the facility provide?			
Does the facility provide these services in-house, or are residents required to travel elsewhere to receive the services?			

<b>MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does the facility have psychiatrists or other mental health/mental retardation professionals on-site?			
What kinds of follow-up does the facility have in place to ensure required services are being received?			
What types of therapeutic activities does the facility offer to meet mental health or mental retardation needs? (Ask for available calendars of activities.)			

<b>NURSING HOME LIVING SPACES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does the nursing home appear clean and well kept?			
Is the nursing home free from overwhelming unpleasant odors?			
Is the temperature in the nursing home comfortable for residents?			
Does the nursing home have good lighting, including inside elevators?			
Are all common areas, resident rooms, and doorways designed for wheelchair use?			
Is there an out-of-doors area where residents can walk or sit and is it used?			
Are noise levels in the dining room and other common areas comfortable?			
Is smoking either not allowed or restricted to certain areas of the nursing home?			
Are furnishings sturdy, yet comfortable and attractive?			
Are there wide, clear walking areas?			
Are showers and bathrooms clean, large enough to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers?			

<b>RESIDENTS' APPEARANCE</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are residents clean and well groomed?			
Are residents appropriately dressed for the season or time of day?			
Do residents appear to be wearing their own clothing?			
Do residents appear to socialize with each other?			

<b>RESIDENT ROOMS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do residents have personal belongings and/or furniture in their rooms, including at least one comfortable chair?			

<b>RESIDENT ROOMS (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does each resident have his/her own dresser and closet space with a locked drawer or other secured compartment?			
Does each resident have a window in the bedroom?			
Do residents have access to a personal telephone with privacy and television?			
Can water pitchers be reached by residents? Do cups have straws?			
Do residents share rooms? How many people to a room?			
Are rooms assigned based on severity of illness?			
Does the facility select compatible roommates?			
Do residents have a choice of roommates?			
How does the facility deal with problems between roommates?			

<b>SAFETY</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does the nursing home have smoke detectors and sprinklers?			
Does the nursing home have an emergency evacuation plan and hold regular fire drills with the local fire department?			
Does the equipment—wheelchairs, therapy devices—appear to be in good condition?			
Are there tripping hazards or unstored cleaning supplies or chemicals that might cause accidents?			
Does the nursing home have an arrangement with a nearby hospital for emergencies and disasters?			

<b>SPEECH, PHYSICAL AND SPECIAL THERAPY ROOMS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
How frequently will therapy be offered?			
Can therapies be provided on an optional basis or a for-private-pay basis?			
Is the physician involved in assessing the therapy and the resident's response to it?			

<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does the relationship between the staff and the residents appear to be warm, polite, and respectful?			
Do all staff wear name tags?			

<b>STAFF (cont.)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do the staff knock on the door before entering a resident's room and refer to residents by name?			
Do staff respond to someone calling for help?			
Does the nursing home offer training and continuing education program for all staff?			
Does the nursing home do background checks on all staff?			
Does the guide on the tour know the residents by name and is recognized by them?			
Is there a full-time Registered Nurse (RN) in the nursing home at all times, aside from the Administrator or Director of Nursing?			
Does the same team of nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) work with the same resident 4 to 5 days per week?			
Do the CNAs work with a reasonable number of residents?			
How many staff work on the unit the potential resident would live in; how many on each shift?			
How does the nursing home ensure that staff really know the resident they are assigned?			
Is each resident cared for by the same staff?			
Are the CNAs involved in care planning meetings?			
Is there is a full-time social worker on staff?			
Is there a licensed doctor on staff? Is he or she there daily? Can he or she be reached at all times?			
Have the nursing home's management team worked together for at least one year?			
Ask for the name and contact information of the President of the Resident/Family Council.			
Are Resident/Family Council meeting minutes available for review?			



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**Section 21782 of the Michigan Public Health Code (Public Act 368 of 1978) requires that nursing homes have specific information available for public inspection. That information includes:**

1. A complete copy of each inspection report of the nursing home received from the department during the past 5 years.
2. A copy of each notice of a hearing or order pertaining to the nursing home issued by the department or a court. The copy of the notice or order shall be retained for not less than 3 years after its date of issuance or not less than 3 years after the date of the resolution of the subject matter of the notice or order, whichever is later.
3. A description of the services provided by the nursing home and the rates charged for those services and items for which a patient may be separately charged.
4. A list of the name, address, principal occupation, and official position of each person who, as a stockholder or otherwise, has a proprietary interest in the nursing home, of each officer and director of a nursing home which is a corporation, and of each trustee or beneficiary of a nursing home which is a trust.
5. A list of licensed personnel employed or retained by the nursing home.